

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Carol C. Lam***

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***For Immediate Release***

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### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - May 28, 2004

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam today announced the conviction in United States District Court in San Diego, today of Roberto Armenta-Orozco on drug trafficking charges. A federal jury returned verdicts early Friday afternoon, convicting Armenta-Orozco of conspiracy to distribute marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, and importation of marijuana.

The charges of which defendant was found guilty arise from events that occurred on April 14, 2003. On that day, defendant Armenta-Orozco drove his tractor-trailer, containing approximately 6,753 pounds of marijuana, into the United States through the Otay Mesa Commercial Port of Entry. The evidence at trial established that he was driving a 1975 Freightliner tractor hauling a trailer containing the marijuana mixed with approximately 30,000 pounds of frozen squid which was ultimately destined for South Korea. His manifest claimed that he was transporting approximately 35,000 pounds of frozen squid. A random canine search of the cargo facility was conducted and a narcotic detector dog alerted to the presence of a drug emanating from Armenta's trailer. The inspectors at the Port of Entry immediately notified the Special

Agents with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement to set up surveillance to follow Armenta, who did not know about the canine alert to the marijuana in the trailer. After stopping at four locations in Otay Mesa, Armenta-Orozco dropped off the trailer containing the marijuana and frozen squid at a nearby truck stop, where several coconspirators, including Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, Arturo Castillas-Delgado, and Rafael Yee Gonzalez, attempted to off-load the marijuana before the container left for South Korea. Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, Arturo Castillas-Delgado, and Rafael Yee Gonzalez, were arrested at the truck stop as they attempted to switch the packages of marijuana, with packages of frozen squid from a second truck. Defendant Armento-Orozco was arrested after a more intensive investigation revealed his involvement.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Sherri Walker Hobson, who prosecuted the case, defendant Armenta-Orozco is scheduled to appear before the Honorable M. James Lorenz for sentencing on August 30, 2004, at 9:00 a.m. Codefendants Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, Arturo Castillas-Delgado, and Rafael Yee Gonzalez, pled guilty to possession of marijuana with intent to distribute prior to the trial. They are scheduled for sentencing on June 11, 2004 at 9:00 a.m.

This case was investigated by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

### **DEFENDANT**

Roberto Armenta-Orozco

### **SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Title 21, United States Code, Section 846 and 841 – Conspiracy to distribute marijuana

Title 21, United States Code, Section 841 – Possession of marijuana with intent to distribute

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 960 and 962 – Importation of marijuana

Maximum penalty per count: mandatory minimum term of 10 years to life; fine of \$4,000,000; five years of supervised release.

### **AGENCY**

Immigration and Customs Enforcement